

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, NP

SUBJECT: NEW CABINET IN NEPAL

REF: KATHMANDU 1727

1. SUMMARY: NEW CABINET ANNOUNCED BY KING CONTAINS FEW

SURPRISES AND IS COMPOSED OF "TRIED AND TRUE" POLITICIANS. WE WOULD EXPECT THAT NEW FONMIN ARYAL WILL PLAY PROMINENT ROLE AS WILL MINISTER OF STATE GHIMIRE WHOSE RESPONSIBILITIES HAVE BEEN EXPANDED TO INCLUDE EDUCATION, AS WELL AS COMMUNICATIONS. WE EXPECT NO MAJOR SHIFTS IN EITHER DOMESTIC OR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AS RESULT OF CABINET CHANGES. END SUMMARY.

2. NEW CABINET ANNOUNCED APRIL 14 IS RELATIVELY LACKLUSTER GROUP, NOTABLY DEVOID OF NEW FACES. PRIME MINISTER RIJAL HAS BEEN GIVEN NEW POLITICAL LEASE ON LIFE WHICH SHOULD LAST UNTIL REPORT OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM COMMISSION LATER THIS YEAR. RIJAL HAD BEEN CRITICIZED FOR FAILURE TO CREATE UNIFIED CABINET AND HIS DIFFERENCES WITH FORMER MINISTERS (SUCH AS FONMIN KARKI) WERE WELL KNOWN. PRESUMABLY NEW GROUP WILL BE MORE MALLEABLE TO HIS POLICIES AND METHODS.

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3. ALL MINISTERS AND MINISTERS OF STATE HAVE SERVED IN

PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS, AND WE ASSUME DEPARTMENT HAS SUFFICIENT BIO DATA AVAILABLE. ONLY NEW FIGURES ARE THREE ASSISTANT MINISTERS: KHADKA (HOME), GHALE (FORESTS), AND RAJBAHAK (INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE). FIRST TWO ARE UNKNOWN WHO HAVE SERVED IN PANCHAYAT FOR NUMBER OF YEARS, BUT RAJBAHAK IS PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS AT TRIBHUVAN AND RECOGNIZED AUTHORITY ON INDO-NEPALESE TRADE PROBLEMS WHOSE ACADEMIC BACKGROUND WILL BE PUT TO TEST IN YEAR IN WHICH NEW TRADE AGREEMENT MUST BE NEGOTIATED WITH INDIA.

4. FOREIGN MINISTER ARYAL WILL PROBABLY BE ONE OF MOST PROMINENT FIGURES IN CABINET AFTER PRIME MINISTER. ARYAL, WHO HAS HELD PORTFOLIO FOR EDUCATION, RECEIVED M.A. FROM UNIVERSITY OF OREGON IN 1956 AND WAS DIRECTOR OF FULBRIGHT COMMISSION IN NEPAL FROM 1961-67. AS SUCH HE IS WELL KNOWN TO MISSION AND FAVORABLY DISPOSED TO US.

5. WE NOTE THAT RADHA PRASAD GHIMIRE'S RESPONSIBILITIES HAVE BEEN ENLARGED TO INCLUDE EDUCATION, CONFIRMING VIEW THAT HE IS SOMEONE WITH CONSIDERABLE FUTURE POTENTIAL. HE IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH RIJAL AND ALTHOUGH FORMER COMMUNIST, IS SAID TO BE STRONG ADMINISTRATOR AND WILLING TO PRESENT HIS VIEWS FORCEFULLY. HOWEVER, IT IS NOT CERTAIN THAT HE WILL RETAIN EDUCATION RESPONSIBILITIES AND WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT NEWLY NOMINATED MEMBER OF PANCHAYAT, MRS. ANGUR BABA JOSHI, MAY BE GIVEN EDUCATION POST WHEN SHE RETURNS FROM ABROAD.)

6. IVP GRANTEE MRS. SUSHILA THAPA WAS AMONG THREE ASSISTANT MINISTERS PROMOTED TO MINISTER OF STATE (THAPA, BALARAM MAGAR AND HARI NAYARAN RAJAURIA), A SIMILAR HONOR WAS NOT ACCORDED DR. BHEKH THAPA WHO HAD EXPECTED TO BE PROMOTED TO FULL MINISTER.

7. ALTHOUGH NEW CABINET IS COMPOSED OF PERSONS WITH WIDE RANGE OF GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE, THERE IS NO ONE TO CAPTURE IMAGINATION OF PEOPLE NOR, WE SUSPECT, TO CHALLENGE PALACE OR PRIME MINISTER. TWO OF NEW MINISTERS (SINGH AND BHOJ RAJ GHIMIRE) HAD BEEN WIDELY ATTACKED IN PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATIONS AND ARE FAR FROM POPULAR CHOICES.

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8. EMBASSY WILL SUBMIT COMPLETE BIO DATA BY POUCH.
CARGO

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